DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD

+ + + + + MEETING

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IN THE MATTER OF:

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Big Chair Cafe, LLC

t/a Big Chair Coffee & Grill: Show Cause 2122 Martin Luther King Jr.: Hearing

Ave SE

Retailer CR License No. 85903 ANC 8A

Case No. 13-CMP-00337

MARCH 4, 2015

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board met in the Alcoholic Beverage Control Hearing Room, Reeves Building, 2000 14th Street N.W., Washington, D.C., Chairperson Ruthanne Miller, presiding.

PRESENT

RUTHANNE MILLER, Chairperson NICK ALBERTI, Member DONALD BROOKS, Member HERMAN JONES, Member JAMES SHORT, Member MICHAEL SILVERSTEIN, Member HECTOR RODRIGUEZ, Member

ALSO PRESENT:

WALTER ADAMS, ESQ

PROCEEDINGS

1 2 11:42 a.m. CHAIR MILLER: Next case on the 3 calendar is case number 13-CMP-00337. Big Chair 4 Coffee and Grill, located at 2122 Martin Luther 5 King Jr. Avenue, SE. License number 85903, and 6 7 ANC 8A. Good morning. MR. ADAMS: Good morning, Madam Chair 8 9 and members of the board. 10 MEMBERS: Morning. 11 MR. ADAMS: It's still morning. I'm Walter Adams representing the District of 12 13 Columbia. CHAIR MILLER: Okay, is anybody here 14 15 from the Big Chair Coffee and Grill 16 establishment? I'm not seeing anyone. The case was called for 10 o'clock and it's 11:42, so 17 18 they've certainly had time to get here. Have you been in touch with them, Mr. Adams? 19 20 MR. ADAMS: I have not been in touch with the establishment. I note from the, 21

actually this case was originally assigned, was

actually assigned to my colleague, Michael Stern, but I noticed from the notes here that the licensee did not appear for the status hearing on January 21st either, so but I have not been in contact with the establishment.

CHAIR MILLER: My records show that notice was served on December 17, 2014. Alright, so are you prepared to go forward ex parte?

MR. ADAMS: Yes, I am.

CHAIR MILLER: Whenever you're ready.

MR. ADAMS: Okay, Madam Chairman, I'll waive the opening statement with the exception of just stating that there is two charges in this case. One, that there was substantial change in the operation of the establishment without approval, and that the establishment was operating without entertainment. Those are the two charges.

CHAIR MILLER: Okay.

MR. ADAMS: I am prepared, and like I said, I'll waive opening statements. And I can proceed, my only witness is Derek Brooks.

1	CHAIR MILLER: Okay.
2	MR. ADAMS: And I'll ask him to come
3	and stand.
4	CHAIR MILLER: Is that your only
5	witness?
6	MR. ADAMS: Only witness, yes.
7	CHAIR MILLER: Okay, good morning, Mr.
8	Brooks.
9	MR. BROOKS: Good morning.
10	CHAIR MILLER: Do you swear to tell
11	the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
12	truth?
13	MR. BROOKS: I do.
14	CHAIR MILLER: Alright, thank you.
15	MR. ADAMS: Mr. Brooks, can you
16	please, well, I'll let you get settled.
17	MR. BROOKS: Okay.
18	MR. ADAMS: Alright, can you please
19	state your name and spell it for the record?
20	MR. BROOKS: Yes, it's Derek Brooks,
21	D-E-R-E-K B-R-O-O-K-S.
22	MR. ADAMS: Alright, Mr. Brooks,

1	you're currently an employee with the District of
2	Columbia government?
3	MR. BROOKS: Yes, I am.
4	MR. ADAMS: And you're working with,
5	are you with the Department of Health?
6	MR. BROOKS: Yes, I am with the
7	Department of Health.
8	MR. ADAMS: Is there a certain office
9	you're working for?
LO	MR. BROOKS: Pharmaceutical control
11	division as an investigator.
12	MR. ADAMS: And in 2013 you worked
13	with the D.C. Alcoholic Beverage Regulation
14	Administration, is that correct?
15	MR. BROOKS: Yes, I did.
16	MR. ADAMS: Okay. And while you were
17	with ABRA, which is the acronym for that, did you
18	have an occasion to have a case involving the Big
19	Chair Coffee and Grill?
20	MR. BROOKS: Yes, I did.
21	MR. ADAMS: And did that case result
22	in an investigative report?

1	MR. BROOKS: Yes, it did.
2	MR. ADAMS: And you have in your
3	possession a document that's marked as, for
4	identification purposes, as the District Exhibit
5	1. Do you recognize that document?
6	MR. BROOKS: Yes, I do.
7	MR. ADAMS: And what is that?
8	MR. BROOKS: It's a case report
9	written by myself for the case 13-CMP-00337.
10	MR. ADAMS: Is that an accurate
11	version of the investigative report that you
12	prepared for the document?
13	MR. BROOKS: Yes, it is.
14	MR. ADAMS: For this case?
15	MR. BROOKS: Yes, it is.
16	MR. ADAMS: Alright. Madam Chairwoman
17	I'd like to move into evidence Mr. Brooks'
18	investigative report.
19	CHAIR MILLER: Okay, that's admitted.
20	(Whereupon, the above-referred to
21	document was received into evidence as Exhibit
22	1.)

1	MR. ADAMS: And I have additional
2	copies if the board so desires.
3	CHAIR MILLER: We have copies. This
4	is in the case report, the investigative case
5	report?
6	MR. ADAMS: Yes, the investigating
7	report.
8	MR. BROOKS: Yes.
9	CHAIR MILLER: Okay, and that's the
10	District's Exhibit Number 1?
11	MR. ADAMS: District's Exhibit, yes.
12	CHAIR MILLER: Okay.
13	MR. ADAMS: Alright, so, Mr. Brooks,
14	take us back to, did you have occasion around
15	June 26, 2013 to be present on the premises known
16	as the Big Chair Coffee and Grill?
17	MR. BROOKS: Yes, I did.
18	MR. ADAMS: And can you explain to the
19	board why you were there?
20	MR. BROOKS: A police officer from the
21	seventh district came into our offices here at
22	the 14th Street, here at ABRA Headquarters and

1	made a complaint against the Big Chair, verbal
2	complaint, saying that they were offering
3	entertainment without an endorsement, selling
4	alcohol to minors, and just felt that they were
5	doing things unlicensed, in addition didn't
6	believe that the guy running the establishment,
7	according to the police officer, was operating
8	without a license.
9	MR. ADAMS: So what happened after the
10	complaint was made?
11	MR. BROOKS: That evening, when we

MR. BROOKS: That evening, when we went onto the evening tour, which was June 26, he came into the office to make this complaint the week prior. I can't recall the exact date. On that day, June 26, 2013, we were working evening tour and I went over to the Big Chair to look into these allegations.

MR. ADAMS: Alright, and what did you find when you got there?

MR. BROOKS: I went into the establishment in an undercover capacity. I went in and I ordered food and sat down and just

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It was a karaoke machine set up and a observed. guy was there with a microphone and singing and offering people to come sing or however that karaoke function works. They're reading the words on the screen and they're singing. asked a bartender what it was they were doing, and she said it was karaoke night. Said that they were doing karaoke, they do it every She further went on to tell me if I Wednesday. come in on Friday there would be a band. And so I said okay, great, thanks. I finished my meal and eventually left.

MR. ADAMS: And to your knowledge did you check to see whether this establishment had any endorsements or other approvals to have entertainment?

MR. BROOKS: Yes, prior to visiting the establishment I looked and checked their record and they had no entertainment endorsement on file.

MR. ADAMS: Did you two have any other conversations on the night of the 26th?

1	MR. BROOKS: Just that about what else
2	they do. You know, I attempted to get a flier
3	for the entertainment on Friday and she said they
4	didn't have anymore fliers, so I just wanted to
5	determine. I wasn't able, you know, I didn't
6	want to ask a whole bunch of questions, you know,
7	in reference to ownership, management, so I just
8	took what I had, what I observed. I did notice
9	the licenses hanging on the wall, but I couldn't
10	get close enough to get a full view of them.
11	MR. ADAMS: Okay, and so was that all
12	that occurred on that day?
13	MR. BROOKS: That was it for that day.
14	MR. ADAMS: Alright, so then did you
15	go to the establishment on another day?
16	MR. BROOKS: Yes, I did, on that
17	Saturday night into Sunday morning, June 30 would
18	be the actual date, it was, like, after midnight,
19	June 30. I'm sorry.
20	MR. ADAMS: Right.
21	MR. BROOKS: No, that's correct. Yes,
22	T went in on that night about midnight and they

were actually, there was no band, but they had a 1 2 DJ set up. He had set up his DJ stand in the front area by the window and, you know, he was 3 playing music. 4 MR. ADAMS: And did you have any 5 conversations with anyone at the establishment 6 7 that night? MR. BROOKS: Yes, at that point I 8 9 identified myself as an ABRA investigator, and I 10 conducted a regulatory inspection. 11 MR. ADAMS: And did you get a chance 12 to speak with the owner? 13 MR. BROOKS: No, I spoke with the ABC manager identified as Mr. Michael Sterling. 14 15 represented himself as purchasing, as going to be 16 the owner. He said he had an agreement to act, you know, to purchase the restaurant, but he was 17 18 a licensed ABC manager, and all of the 19 information about being an owner and purchasing, 20 I was able to verify that he was not owner of record when I got back to ABRA headquarters. 21 22 MR. ADAMS: So other than the fact

that there was entertainment did you find any 1 2 other violations that night? MR. BROOKS: No, no other ABRA 3 violations were noted. 4 MR. ADAMS: Okay, turning to 5 District's Exhibit 2 of my exhibit, there is a 6 7 photograph. Is that the DJ who was playing that night? 8 9 MR. BROOKS: Yes it is. 10 MR. ADAMS: Okay. MR. BROOKS: And if I could add that 11 I did, when I did let them know that they were 12 13 not permitted to have entertainment he shut the DJ down. He told them to pack up, you know, they 14 15 weren't permitted, so he did stop the activity 16 once told. MR. ADAMS: And that's it, I have no 17 18 further questions for Mr. Brooks. 19 CHAIR MILLER: Questions from the 20 board members? Just to be clear, so you went on two different days? 21 22 MR. BROOKS: Yes.

1	CHAIR MILLER: And your testimony is
2	that on each of those days they had entertainment
3	and they didn't have an entertainment
4	endorsement?
5	MR. BROOKS: Correct.
6	CHAIR MILLER: Okay, and were they
7	operating in any other way outside their license?
8	MR. BROOKS: No, they were not.
9	CHAIR MILLER: Thank you. Alright,
10	anybody else? Any questions based on board
11	questions?
12	MEMBER ALBERTI: Just very quickly.
13	So on the first instance, you spoke to them about
14	the fact that they should not have entertainment?
15	MR. BROOKS: No, sir, did not mention
16	that at all.
17	MEMBER ALBERTI: Alright, so it was on
18	the second instance when you returned that you
19	spoke to them about that?
20	MR. BROOKS: Correct.
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21	MEMBER ALBERTI: Thank you.

questions. 1 2 CHAIR MILLER: Anybody else? Could you just clarify, the first instance was what day 3 of the week? 4 It was a Wednesday night. 5 MR. BROOKS: CHAIR MILLER: A Wednesday? Okay, and 6 7 the other one, was that a Saturday? MR. BROOKS: It was, like, a Saturday, 8 9 yes. 10 CHAIR MILLER: Okay, and were they the 11 same week? 12 MR. BROOKS: Oh, yes, ma'am. 13 CHAIR MILLER: Okay. MR. BROOKS: And the only reason I 14 15 went back was because, and the reason I didn't 16 identify that and make note of that the first time was because they told me that they were 17 18 going to have a band and it was like an ongoing 19 thing, so I wanted to just verify that before 20 making my identity known. CHAIR MILLER: anybody else? Alright, thank you very much. 21 22 MR. ADAMS: And the board, sorry, the

district rests this case.

CHAIR MILLER: Okay.

MR. ADAMS: And if I could just have a quick summation, Madam Chairwoman.

CHAIR MILLER: Okay.

MR. ADAMS: Yes, very quickly, there's two issues in this case or two charges. The first, and very quickly, I think obviously we provided enough evidence to show that a prima facie case of the establishment has violated both of those charges or we've proven those charges by preponderance of evidence.

In terms, very quickly, in terms of charge two, this is through Mr. Brooks' testimony, it's pretty clear that on both of those nights on June 26, 2013 and June 30th that they were providing entertainment, and since they do not have an endorsement or other licenses, that's pretty clear that a violation occurred, thus proving charge two.

In terms of charge one, which is that there would be a substantial change, this does

actually also proven as well. This isn't a situation where it only happened on one occasion and it could have been some type of a special circumstance, this is within what was the operations of the establishment. The three things that was testified by Investigator Brooks are reports, number one, that there was on June 26 that he saw the karaoke and that he saw some performing. The second thing that was also very critical was the conversation. Further testimony was that in the conversation he had with the bartender that says this is karaoke night, meaning this is a regular. The board can at least make the implication, by implications, that means it a regular weekly occurrence. And there is also a band on Friday, again, a regular weekly occurrence, and lastly, obviously, the fact that he saw that there was a DJ Saturday night. pretty much you have a real rotation of things where in this case the establishment was not known for them to actually have entertainment or music as part of their operations prior to this

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investigation. So, therefore, that would constitute the elements of a substantial change where at one point they were known to not have something as part of their approved operations, but then have, certainly, on a regular basis, entertainment and music as part of their operations. So, both charges are proven.

This case, because the charges happened in 2013 before I think there was a change in the regulations, we believe that the charge one is a secondary tier violation. Obliviously, charge two is also a secondary tier violation in terms of the establishment operating without entertainment endorsement. Based upon our calculations, this is, this case would represent, I believe, their third, well, I guess their third secondary tier violations, which the board can obviously fine them 750 to 1,000 dollars. So for both of them the district would recommend a 1,000 dollar fine for both of those That's all. Those are the district's charges. arguments for this case.

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1	CHAIR MILLER: A thousand each? Is
2	that correct? You recommend one thousand for
3	each?
4	MR. ADAMS: One thousand for each
5	charge.
6	CHAIR MILLER: Okay.
7	MEMBER ALBERTI: May I ask a question
8	and we'll conclude. So, charge one is
9	substantial change?
10	MR. ADAMS: Yes.
11	MEMBER ALBERTI: That's a primary?
12	MR. ADAMS: This, I believe, for at
13	the time that the violation happened in 2013 it
14	may have been, I believe, at the time it was
15	secondary tier.
16	MEMBER ALBERTI: Oh, and so that's
17	why, okay. I got you.
18	MR. ADAMS: Those were in 2013. So
19	now it would be a primary.
20	MEMBER ALBERTI: Now it's a primary,
21	but back then it was a secondary?
22	MR. ADAMS: Exactly.

MEMBER ALBERTI: I go you. Thank you.

We can check that on our records. Thank you.

MR. ADAMS: Alright.

CHAIR MILLER: Good. Okay. Alright, then, I'm just going to call the vote for considering this case in closed session. chairperson for the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board with the District of Columbia and in accordance with section 405 of the open meetings amendment act of 2010, I move that the ABC Board hold a closed meeting for the purpose of seeking legal advice from our counsel in case number 13-CMP-00337, Big Chair Coffee and Grill. section 405(b)4 of the open meetings amendment act of 2010 and deliberating upon this case for the reason cited in Section 405(b)13 of the open meetings amendment act of 2010. Is there a second?

MEMBER GONZALEZ: Second.

CHAIR MILLER: Mr. Gonzalez has seconded the motion. I'll now take a roll call for the motion now that it's been seconded. Mr.

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1	Brooks:
2	MEMBER BROOKS: I agree.
3	CHAIR MILLER: Mr. Alberti?
4	MEMBER ALBERTI: I agree.
5	CHAIR MILLER: Mr. Rodriguez?
6	MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: I agree.
7	CHAIR MILLER: Ms. Miller agrees. Mr.
8	Silverstein?
9	MEMBER SILVERSTEIN: I agree.
10	CHAIR MILLER: Mr. Short?
11	MEMBER SHORT: I agree.
12	CHAIR MILLER: Okay, it appears that
13	the motion has passed by a 6-0-0 vote and this
14	board will then consider this case in closed
15	session and issue an order within 90 days. Thank
16	you very much.
17	MR. ADAMS: Thank you very much. See
18	you soon.
19	(Whereupon, case 13-CMP-00337 was
20	concluded at 12:00 p.m.)
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